

The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), a companion survey to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), was launched in 2007. Since then, more than 665,000 entering first-year students at 441 institutions across the US and Canada have participated.

BCSSE collects data about entering college students' high school academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.

BCSSE administration usually takes place prior to the start of fall classes and is designed to be paired with a NSSE administration in the spring to provide an in-depth understanding of first-year student engagement. Faculty, advisors, administrators, researchers, and others can use BCSSE data independently or in combination with NSSE data for program development, institutional assessment and improvement, and related purposes.

In fall 2015, 107 U.S. institutions participated in BCSSE. Of those, 71 (67%) also administered NSSE in spring 2016, allowing comparisons of incoming students' experiences and expectations with their actual experiences at the end of the first year.

Survey Administration and Respondents

BCSSE is administered locally by campus officials who distribute the paper survey or facilitate the online administration. In 2015, 44 institutions (41%) utilized paper surveys, 62 institutions (57%) chose the online survey, and two institutions (2%) used a combination of the two. Nearly 69,000 entering first-year students completed BCSSE, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, as well as U.S. Armed Forces in America, Europe, and the Pacific. In addition, BCSSE was completed by students at one Canadian institution.

Wondering how to use your BCSSE data? See *Using Your BCSSE Data for excellent recent examples:*
bcsse.indiana.edu/usingBCSSEData.cfm

BCSSE Participating Institutions

Many different types of U.S. institutions participated in BCSSE. Among them, about one in three (34%) were classified as baccalaureate colleges, 50% as master's colleges and universities, and 17% as doctorate-granting universities (see Table 1).

Table 1
Profile of BCSSE 2015 U.S. Institutions and Bachelor's-Granting U.S. Institutions

Institution Characteristics	BCSSE 2015 (%)	U.S. ^a (%)
Carnegie Basic Classification^b		
Doc/Highest: Doctoral Universities (Highest Research Activity)	4	7
Doc/Higher: Doctoral Universities (Higher Research Activity)	6	6
Doc/Moderate: Doctoral Universities (Moderate Research Activity)	7	6
Master's L: Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	24	25
Master's M: Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)	20	11
Master's S: Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)	6	7
Bac/A&S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences Focus	20	17
Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	14	22
Control		
Public	39	34
Private	61	66
Undergraduate Enrollment		
Fewer than 1,000	14	20
1,000–2,499	39	33
2,500–4,999	16	18
5,000–9,999	11	14
10,000–19,999	14	9
20,000 or more	6	6

Notes: Percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classifications in the table. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

a. U.S. percentages are based on the 2014 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data.

b. For information on the Carnegie Foundation's 2015 Basic Classification, see carnegieclassifications.iu.edu.

BCSSE institutions generally reflect the diversity of bachelor's-granting institutions with respect to Carnegie Classification, public or private control, and undergraduate enrollment (Table 1). Public institutions were somewhat more represented than private institutions.

BCSSE U.S. Respondents

BCSSE is locally administered, so sampling schemes and data collection methods vary across the participating institutions, but most institutions sample their entire incoming first-year population and typically collect data from 50% to nearly 100% of their students. Thus, BCSSE 2015 respondents, profiled in Table 2, likely provide institutions accurate estimates of those incoming first-year classes.

Most BCSSE respondents graduated from a public high school, with more than half reporting they typically earned grades of A or A– (see Table 3). Also, while most students attend an institution that is relatively close to home, about 20% must travel four or more hours to campus.

Table 2
Profile of BCSSE 2015 U.S. Respondents:
Demographic Characteristics

	Percentage of Respondents
Gender Identity	
Man	43
Woman	57
Another gender identity	<1
Prefer not to respond	<1
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaska native	<1
Asian	5
Black or African American	10
Hispanic or Latino	7
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	<1
White	66
Multiracial	8
Other	1
I prefer not to respond	2
International Student	4
High School Graduation Year	
2012 or earlier	1
2013	1
2014	3
2015	95
First-Generation Student^a	49
Financial Aid Recipient^b	93

a. Neither parent (or guardian) holds a bachelor's degree.

b. Received any scholarship, grant, or student loan.

Table 3

Profile of BCSSE 2015 U.S. Respondents: School Experience Characteristics

	Percentage of Respondents
High School Type	
Public	82
Private, religiously affiliated	12
Private, not religiously affiliated	4
Home school	1
Other	1
High School Grades (Typical)	
A	30
A-	23
B+	21
B	18
B-	4
C+ or lower	3
Driving Time from Home to Institution	
Less than 1 hour	34
At least 1, less than 2 hours	21
At least 2, less than 4 hours	24
At least 4, less than 6 hours	7
At least 6, less than 8 hours	3
8 hours or more	10

Notes: Includes both U.S. and Canadian institutions, and 20 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.



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